

Saratoga Springs city building permits to be held up on changes to building inspector job descriptions

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SARATOGA SPRINGS — The Saratoga Springs Civil Service Commission has amended the job descriptions of the city building inspectors, making it impossible to get a building permit.

According to Mayor Scott Johnson, the commission met Monday in executive session to change the descriptions of the assistant building inspectors, making them unable to issue the permits.

Previous to Johnson's first-term, the lead building inspector (known as the senior inspector) was the only member of departmental personnel who could issue building permits.

Working with the commission, Johnson said the descriptions were amended to allow assistants to issue the permits as well. The top position has been vacant since Lautitz Rasmussen was dismissed in April 2009, leaving two assistant inspectors.

"It had been in place for a number of months now and working quite well," he said.

Describing the changes as "untenable to the city" and an "antiquated power play," Johnson said Thursday that city officials are talking to outside counsel to determine the legality of the commission's revision.

"This is just contrary to our very effort," Johnson said of his push for greater efficiency in the building department.

He said that in Jan. 2008 it took between 12 and 13 weeks to get a building permit, a duration which at last measurement had improved to four weeks. "We're not abandoning the need for a senior inspector," he said, adding that they had been receiving applications for the position as recently as last week.

"We believe we had the best solution given the size of the department," he said.

Commission chairman Elio Delsette referred comment on the matter to commission secretary Patsy Berrigan, who was not available for comment by press time Thursday.